
LANGPORT RURAL SANITARY
AUTHORITY.

REPORTS
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF
HEALTH
FOR THE YEAR 1898.

LANGPORT:
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ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS.

“Gentlemen,—The area of the district is 95,416 acres, and the population at the last census 14,479. Though the births have since been largely in excess of the deaths it would be unsafe to estimate any permanent increase, migration having probably carried off the surplus. It is certain that nearly all the villages are decaying and losing their inhabitants, Langport, Somerton and Westport alone showing any vitality, and possessing industries other than agriculture. The following table comprises the most important vital statistics :—

	1898.	1897.	1896.	1895.
Birth rate per 1,000 living	23·3	23·7	24·5	25·6
Death rate do. do.	14·3	14·8	16·3	14·3
Zymotic death rate do.	·05	·09	—	—
Infants mortality, under one year, per 1,000 births	85·8	148	120·7	99·4

SCARLATINA.—Sixty-two cases of scarlatina were notified during the year and prevailing during the summer months, the type was mild and the mortality small. Printed instructions were in every case supplied for the prevention of infection, and in most cases were successful. At Drayton, where the disease had taken some hold, an isolation hospital was established

with the most satisfactory results and a rapid disappearance. This, though entailing some expense, is by far the most effective way of dealing with an infectious epidemic, the cottages of the poor being antagonistic to complete isolation and attention to detailed instruction in many cases impracticable.

TYPHOID FEVER.—There were nine cases of typhoid notified and four deaths. In every case a polluted water supply was detected as the cause. One case occurred in Langport, two in Kingsbury and five in Somerton or district. Somerton with its pure water supply might be supposed to be exempt from such an infliction, but inquiry elicited that some old wells had been resorted to and analysis showed them to be impure. The origin of typhoid being intimately associated with impure water and being of annual occurrence in this district, it is useful to consider what measures have been adopted, are projected, and are further practicable to its improvement.

WATER SUPPLY.—The works at Somerton, effectively designed and well carried out, continue in active operation and add most beneficially to the health and prosperity of this town. No case of fever has ever been traced to the use of this water and those using it may be pronounced absolutely safe. The new works for the supply of Westport and Hambridge are now completed, and there is wholesome water at both these places where it was much needed. An extension to Curry Rivel and Drayton is authorised where extensive pollution has recently been detected in existing wells. Other villages would greatly benefit by improved water, but all have not the same natural facilities for acquiring it and are too small to justify much outlay. Kingsbury and the adjoining hamlets are of this nature. Situated on a dead level with imperfect drainage and surface nuisances abounding, the subsoil water is found at six feet and as might be expected is productive of disease from its impurity. In such a case I would suggest that a fresh well be sunk outside the village on a sound

piece of ground removed from nuisances. Let it be covered in and fitted with a pump, worked by a windmill, and raising water into an overhead tank, a pipe thence conducting water through the village. Such a contrivance has long been in operation at Messrs. Kelway's nurseries, where a never-failing supply is derived from the green sand underlying the property. Langport has also been agitated by a demand for better water. Here the town pump is mostly used, and though the quality is shown by analysis to be fair, it is inconveniently situated for many of the cottages and entails much labour in carrying. In any future extension of the town Mr. Kelway's green sand will have to be drawn upon, and a pipe laid from there down the street.

SEWERAGE.—Nothing in the way of new construction has been accomplished during the year, and existing systems were described in my last annual report.

DISINFECTION.—At the renovation of the Workhouse a disinfecting oven was fitted, and is in use. Sulphur fumigation is carried out in dwellings under the supervision of the inspector, and, as a rule, has proved effectual after contagious disease. No isolation hospital exists, and in a wide scattered district such as this it would be difficult to administer. It seems more feasible to utilise an old building on the spot, as required.

DAIRIES.—No systematic inspection of dairies is carried out. As but little raw milk is sent to market, the necessity was not considered to exist.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES are regularly visited by the Inspector, who makes suggestions when needed. The existence of slaughter-houses in the midst of dwellings is objectionable, and is commonly practised, but being an old custom is difficult to remedy in the absence of any specific nuisance.

WORKING-CLASS HOUSES.—No perceptible change is observable in the cottages, and scarcely any new ones are built. Without being insanitary, many of

the old cottages are rough and comfortless, but are tolerated from immemorial use.

CONCLUSION.—With the exception of scarlatina and typhoid, which I have accounted for, there has been an absence of other epidemic diseases and a slight reduction in the mortality rate.

I am, sir,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN MORGAN, F.R.C.S.,
Medical Officer of Health.

REPORT ON THE LANGPORT UNION WORKHOUSE.

THE inmates of all ages have averaged about fifty in number. At present there are forty-eight. They are mostly aged or infirm, so that great difficulty is experienced in operating the services of the house from among the able-bodied, which sometimes scarcely exist. There were no births during the year, and twelve deaths, two being due to violence—one suicide, one accident. No disease calling for notice has existed in the house, and the improvements carried out have resulted in greater comfort. The ladies' committee, by providing suitable employment for the invalids, have considerably brightened the infirmary wards, while the effect on the health of the occupants has been beneficial. The nuisance occasionally arising from smoky chimneys, which has long been a structural defect of the house, is to be remedied by revolving cowls, and with this effected the house and grounds will offer every comfort to the people who use them.

J. MORGAN.

10th January, 1899.

TABLE OF DEATHS during the year 1898, in the LANGPORT RURAL DISTRICT, classified according to diseases, ages, and localities :—

MORTALITY FROM ALL CAUSES AT SUBJOINED AGES.

		At all ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	(∞)
Langport	...	44	8	—	2	3	13	18	
Workhouse	...	12	—	2	—	—	2	8	
Somerton	...	111	18	4	2	4	31	52	
Curry Rivel	...	41	3	2	—	2	19	15	
	...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Total	...	208	29	8	4	9	65	93	

MORTALITY FROM SUBJOINED CAUSES.

	Scarlatina.	Membranous Croup.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Whooping Cough.	Diarrhoea and Dysentery.	Phthisis.	Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy.	Heart Disease.	Injuries.	All other Diseases.	Total.
Langport	{ under 5 5 upwards 2					1	5	5	2	6	9
Union Workhouse	{ under 5 5 upwards					2	1	1	2	5	10
Somerton	{ under 5 5 upwards	2	3	1	2	9	10	13	4	16	23
Curry Rivel	{ under 5 5 upwards 1		1			4	1	10		4	5
Total	{ under 5 5 upwards 3	2	4	1	2	16	20	29	7	91	170

Table of population, births, and of new cases of infectious sickness coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health during the year 1898, in the Langport Rural District, classified according to diseases, ages, and localities.

Population at last census.	Registered Births.	New cases of sickness in each locality coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health.		
		Scarlatina.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Erysipelas.
Langport	4,640	under 5 64 5 upwards. }	25 3	1
Somerton	5,666	under 5 180 5 upwards. }	17 5	1
Curry Rivel.	4,173	under 5 94 5 upwards. }	20 1	
—	—	—	—	—
14,479	338	under 5 5 upwards. }	62 9	2